

IMPROVING STUDENTS' COMPREHENSION IN READING REPORT TEXT BY USING CONTEXT CLUES TECHNIQUE

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to improve students' comprehension in reading report text by using context clues technique. This study was conducted by using classroom action research. The subject of the research was class IX – 1 in SMPN 1 Binjai which consisted of 23 students. The research covered two cycles and each cycle consisted of three meetings. Based on multiple choice test results, students' scores kept improving in every test. The mean score of the first meeting test in first cycle was 60.87, the mean score of the third meeting test in first cycle was 74.35, and the mean score of the third meeting test in second cycle was 94.35. Based on dairy notes, observation sheet, questionnaire sheets and interview record, it was found that the quality of teaching-learning process ran well and influenced students' courage and understanding in reading. Students were active and interested in learning process. They confidently figured out meanings of words and sentences by themselves through thinking process in order to gain comprehension. The research result showed that using Context Clues Technique could improve students' comprehension in reading report text.

Keywords: Comprehension, Reading, Report, Context Clues Technique

INTRODUCTION

Today's world is positioning English as an international language that is used by human beings. In Indonesia, students should have good skills in using English as a foreign language. One of the important skills that students should attain in learning English is reading. Reading is a process of drawing meaning or grasping information from a written text and forming interpretation of that information (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Since reading is a receptive language skill, comprehension is a useful requirement that readers should have.

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Educational Unit-Oriented Curriculum for Junior High School states that students are required to be able to comprehend meanings of written texts, such as report text. Students as the readers should know the meaning of each sentence to attain comprehension. However, there is a problem when students do not know the meaning of certain words that are not familiar to them. As a result, it is difficult for them to comprehend the text.

The researcher found this problem after doing an observation in SMPN 1 Binjai. Based on an interview with the English teacher, the students had difficulties in reading texts containing unfamiliar words. The basic cause of this problem is lack of vocabulary so a process of comprehending meanings is difficult; besides, media and techniques in teaching-learning process also give influence. Therefore, students need to build their vocabulary by using certain techniques in order to acquire comprehension.

For students of English as Foreign Language (EFL) class, understanding vocabulary is a good skill in reading comprehension. In order to understand a writer's ideas and information in a written text, students as readers have to know meanings of many words. Some researchers have emphasized the important correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension saying that greater vocabulary knowledge makes comprehension easier (Carlo et al. in Karbalaei, A. et al., 2012).

According to French (2002:2), vocabulary-learning strategy or word-learning strategy includes three techniques; they are analyzing context clues, recognizing word parts like prefixes and suffixes, and looking for words within words.

One of those techniques that was used in the research conducted was analyzing context clues. Context clues are words that surround a word or phrase the reader do not know and function as clues to get its meaning (French, 2002). Using context clues as a technique in reading report text can help students understand meanings of words they do not know, and then they can comprehend information delivered. Therefore, it is good for students who are in junior high school to use this technique in learning English because it is useful for them to build comprehension in reading. This technique also helps teacher in presenting an effective procedures in teaching reading.

This word-learning strategy – Context Clues Technique – had been applied in a research conducted by the researcher. The aim of this research is to find out if using this technique can improve students' comprehension in reading report text.

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Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the research question is formulated as follows:

“Does using Context Clues Technique improve students’ comprehension in reading report text?”

Research Objective

In relation to the study, the research objective is to find out if using Context Clues Technique significantly improve students’ comprehension in reading report text.

Research Scope

The research scope is limited on investigating third year students of Junior High School that is focused on improving students’ comprehension in reading report text by using Context Clues Technique.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Nature of Reading Comprehension

Reading is a process of drawing meaning or grasping information from a written text and forming interpretation of that information (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). When someone read a text, he or she expects an understanding to construct meaning. This understanding is called comprehension. Comprehending is a process through which a reader interacts with a text to construct meaning (Rice, 2009). A reader can derive meaning from a text by connecting his or her background or prior knowledge including knowledge of language and experience to the words he or she reads.

Reading is not a simple process. Whenever someone read a text, he or she decodes the words in order to comprehend meanings. Of course, a reader is required to have reading skills or techniques to build comprehension. A reader also needs to have good prior knowledge in order to be able to predict and connect ideas lying in the text. These aspects – reading techniques and prior knowlegde – are the requirements for readers to comprehend written texts.

Report Text

Report text is a text that describes the way things are with reference to a range of natural, man-made and social phenomena in our environment (Gerot and Wignel in Agustien, et al., 2004). It presents information about something that is under discussion. Generally, it is written after getting careful observation. Report text is different from descriptive text which describes one particular or specific thing, person, or place, e.g. “My Teacher”. The basic purpose of report text is to describe general feature of a kind of thing – living or non-natural – in our environment, e.g. “A Kangaroo”, and “Fertilizers”.

Gerot and Wignel in Agustien (2004) state that the generic structure of a report text includes two main parts; they are general classification and description, as the following table describes:

Table 1. The Generic Structure of a Report Text

General Classification	Tells what the phenomenon under discussion is.
Description	Describes the feature of the phenomenon under discussion in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. parts and their functions,b. qualities,c. habits or behaviours – if living; uses – if non-natural.

There are some common grammatical features in report text. According to Gerot and Wignel in Agustien (2004), they are:

- a. Focus on Generic Participants; for example: *A kangaroo is an animal found only in Australia.*
- b. The use of simple present tense (unless extinct); for example: *Kangaroos eat grass and plants.*
- c. No temporal sequence used.
- d. The use of “being” and “having” processes; for example: *is, are, were* (being process); and *has, have, had* (having process)
- e. The use of technical vocabulary.

Context Clues Technique

Context clues are words that surround a word or phrase the reader do not know and function as clues to get its meaning (French, 2002). The clues can appear before and after the unknown words. Using context clues as a technique in reading aims at inferring the meanings of words that a reader does not know. According to Beck et al. in Karbalaie, A. et al. (2012), context clues are defined as words found around an unknown word that provides clues that reveal the meaning of the unknown word. The clues provided in the context can help students determine a word’s meaning.

According to Denton et al. (2007:201), context clues can give students an idea or hint of what an unknown word might mean. The clues are found around the unknown word – whether in the same sentence or in sentences before and after the sentence containing the unknown word. Thus, context clues technique gives benefit to students’ cognitive competence in comprehending reading materials.

There are some types of context clues that can be directly taught to students. Baumann, et al. in Denton et al. (2007:202) list them as the following table:

Table 2. Types of Context Clues

Type of Context Clue	Example*
Definition: The author explains the meaning of the word in the sentence or selection.	When Sara was hiking, she accidentally walked through a patch of brambles , <i>prickly vines and shrubs</i> , which resulted in many scratches to her legs.
Synonym: The author uses a word similar in meaning.	Josh walked into the living room and accidentally tripped over the ottoman . He then mumbled, “I wish people would not leave the <i>footstool</i> right in the middle of the room. That’s dangerous!”
Antonym: The author uses a word nearly opposite in meaning.	The supermarket manager complained, “Why do we have such a plethora of boxes of cereal on the shelves? <i>In contrast</i> , we have a real <i>shortage</i> of pancake and waffle mix. We’ve got to do a better job ordering.”
Example: The author provides one or more example words or ideas.	There are many members of the canine family. <i>For example</i> , <i>wolves</i> , <i>foxes</i> , <i>coyotes</i> , and pets such as <i>collies</i> , <i>beagles</i> , and <i>golden retrievers</i> are all canines.
General: The author provides several words or statements that give clues to the word’s meaning.	It was a sultry day. The day was <i>very hot and humid</i> . If you moved at all, you would <i>break out in a sweat</i> . It was one of those days to <i>drink water</i> and <i>stay in the shade</i> .

Denton et al. (2007:201) list the instructions in finding and using context clues as the following table:

Table 3. The Instructions in Using Context Clues Technique

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reread the sentence that contains the unknown word. Be on the lookout for signal words or punctuation. b. Reread the sentences before and after the sentence that contains the unknown word. c. Based on the clues, try to figure out the meaning of the word. d. Insert the meaning in the original sentence to see whether it makes sense.
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The followings are the procedures of applying the Context Clues Technique in teaching reading (Denton et al., 2007):

Teacher's Activities	Students' Activities
Pre-Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apperception: Asking some students to share what they know about report text. • Telling students the topic and the objective of the study. 	Pre-Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering the teacher's question by telling what they know about report text. • Listening and paying attention.
Main-Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving a brief explanation about report text based on the topic chosen. • Showing the chart which simply lists the different types of context clues in front of the class; for example, showing it by using projector. • Explaining each of context clues with the sample sentences while pointing to the chart. • Guiding students to find meanings of unfamiliar words based on clues in the sample sentences by following the instructions of context clues technique. • Grouping students in partnership. • Giving each partnership a copy of a short report passage as a practice to find meanings of unfamiliar words based on clues in the sentences by following the instructions of context clues technique. • Giving each partnership a copy of chart like the table 2.5 to guide their work. • Circulating around the room and being available for guidance. 	Main-Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying attention to the teacher's explanation about report text based on the topic chosen. • Paying attention to the chart shown by the teacher and listening carefully to the teacher's explanation. • Paying attention to the teacher's explanation. • Following the instructions in using context clues technique to analyze the sample sentences with the teacher's guidance. • Sitting in partnership. • Doing the practice given by the teacher. Discussing with the partner in following the instructions of context clues technique. • Discussing with the partner to fill in the context clues chart. • Asking for the teacher's guidance if there is a difficulty while doing the practice.
Post-Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding students to make a brief conclusion of the lesson. • Evaluating the whole activities that have been done. 	Post-Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a brief conclusion together with the teacher. • Paying attention to the teacher.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted by applying Classroom Action Research (CAR). It is a method for solving the problems of teaching objectively and systematically. According to Lewin in Hien (2009), action research is a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action. Moreover, Carr and Kemmis in Hien (2009) define educational action research as a form of self-reflective inquiry that can be utilized by teachers in order that there will be improvement in rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which these practices are carried out. Action research can be used in developing learning strategies, that is adopting an integrated approach to learning in preference to a single-subject style of teaching and learning (Cohen et al., 2007).

The processes of action research vary in different point of view. But the common process includes some cyclical steps as what Kemmis in Hien (2009) has developed. There is a simple model of the cyclical nature of the typical action research process. Each cycle of an action research has four steps: planning, action, observation and reflection. The sample action research model is presented in the following figure 1.

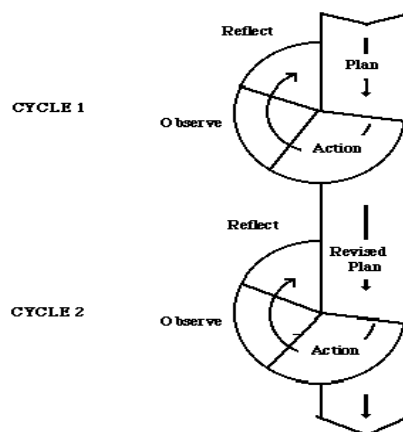


Figure 1. Cyclical action research model based on Kemmis in Hien (2009)

In this research, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The quantitative data were collected by using reading report test in the form of multiple choice, which were used to assess the students' reading achievement during the

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teaching learning process. The qualitative data were collected by using observation sheet, questionnaire sheets, diary notes, and interview record.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the data that had been analyzed, it was found that there was an improvement of students' comprehension achievement in reading report text after the using of context clues technique. It was proved by the fact that the mean of the students scores of the third-meeting test in the second cycle (94.35) was higher than that of the first-meeting test in the first cycle (60.87). The data that were taken from observation sheet, questionnaire sheet, diary notes and interview record show that the using of context clues technique can give improvement on students' learning quality. The students were encouraged in reading report text by using context clues technique, because during the learning process, students discussed with their partners to find the meaning of words they did not know, and they were motivated to think actively and independently. This situation was effective to support students in finding meanings of words and sentences confidently by themselves.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the study there was an improvement on the students' comprehension in reading by using Context Clues Technique. The improvement can be seen from the mean of students' scores – the mean of first-meeting test in cycle 1 (60.87), the mean of third-meeting test in cycle 1 (74.35), and the mean of third-meeting test in cycle 2 (94.35). Besides, the students were more encouraged and interested in learning reading comprehension by using Context Clues Technique. From observation sheet, questionnaire sheets, diary notes and interview record, it is showed that students had improvement on the quality of their learning process, for example, they learned actively and cooperatively with their partners, and they confidently figured out meanings of words and sentences by themselves through thinking process in order to gain comprehension.

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